

Death, the last Enemy, destroyed by CHRIST.

Newton Centre
A Massachusetts

B P 200

S E R M O N

PREACHED, MARCH 27, 1776,

BEFORE

THE HONORABLE

CONTINENTAL CONGRESS;

ON THE DEATH OF

THE HONORABLE

SAMUEL WARD, Esq.

ONE OF THE

DELEGATES FROM THE COLONY
OF RHODE-ISLAND,

WHO DIED OF THE SMALL-POX, IN THIS CITY,
(PHILADELPHIA) MARCH 26, Æt. 52.

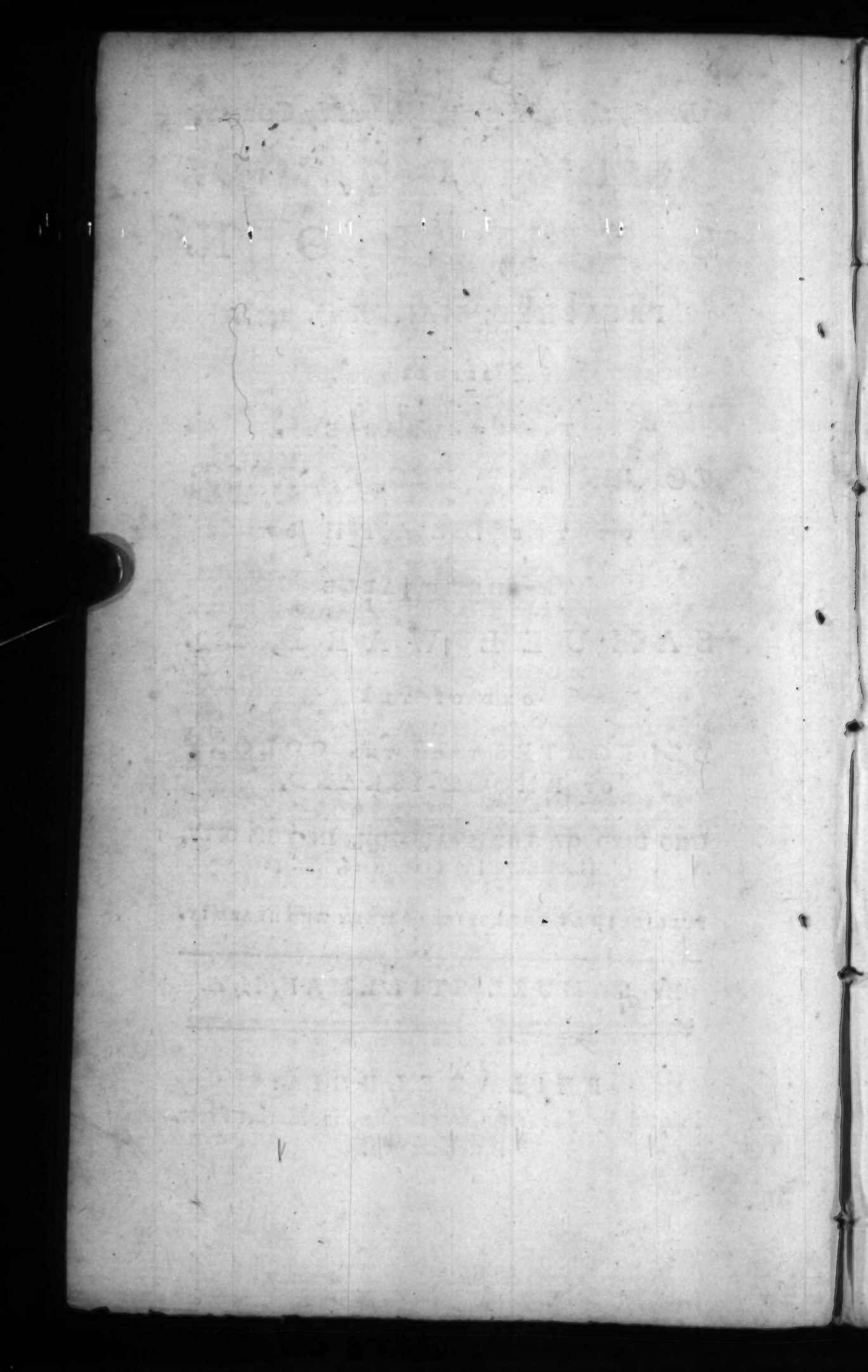
PUBLISHED AT THE DESIRE OF MANY WHO HEARD IT.

BY SAMUEL STILLMAN, M. A.

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TO THE
AFFLICTED FAMILY
OF THE
D E C E A S E D.

My Dear Young Friends,

A CCEPT the following Sermon, now publicly offered, as a small Tribute of that unfeigned Respect, I entertained for Your HONORED FATHER, from the Time of my first Acquaintance with Him.—Great is Your Loss—and great Your Sorrow.—Scarce had You ceased to weep for the Death of that amiable Lady, Your pious Mother; before GOD, infinitely wise and good, hath been pleased to deprive You of one of the best of Father's.—From the Moment I heard, that He was seized with that fatal Illness, I *feared* for Him—I *felt* for You—But You sorrow not as those who have no Hope—He lived beloved

ed—He died lamented.—He did not descend to the Grave *full of Years*, but *full of Honors*. His Life You are not to measure by *Duration*, but by *Action*. Much He did to form Your Minds and Manners, to make You happy, and to promote the Public Good. Nor was his Labor lost.—May all Your future Conduct, be worthy of such a Father.—

BUT Your strongest Consolation, under this heavy Affliction, must arise from the Confidence You have, That He is now with GOD; in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy: And at whose Right Hand are Pleasures forever. That there You may meet Your worthy Parents, and with them enjoy an Eternity of Bliss, is the most ardent Prayer,

Ye Afflicted Youths,
of Your sincere Friend,
and humble Servant,
SAMUEL STILLMAN.

PHILADELPHIA, }
April 3, 1776. }

A
S E R M O N, &c.

1 Cor. xv. 26.

*The last Enemy that shall be destroyed, is
Death.*

TH E R E were certain persons at *Corinth*, who denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; which gave occasion to St. *Paul's* reasoning in the context: By which he labors to establish the grand fact, that *CHRIST was risen*. Having gained this point, he proceeds to shew, that there is a sure connection between the *past* resurrection of *CHRIST*, and the *future* resurrection of his people. *But now is CHRIST risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them who slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, i. e. became subject to mortality: even so by Christ shall all be made*
alive,

alive, i. e. be raised from the grave. But this event will not take place till the end come, when CHRIST shall have delivered up the mediatorial kingdom to GOD, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. THE LAST ENEMY THAT SHALL BE DESTROYED, IS DEATH.

IN the text we observe the following ideas;

I. DEATH is an *enemy*.

II. THE *last* enemy;

III. WHOM Christ will certainly *destroy*.

I. ONE principal idea in this passage is, that death is an *enemy*.

St. PAUL, and other inspired writers speak of death as a *person*; though properly it is the loss of a blessing immensely valuable: *All that a man hath*, says Solomon, *will he give for his life*. The
Apostle's

Apostle's mode of expression, authorizes the manner in which the subject will be treated, as it naturally leads us to consider, in what respects death may be called an *enemy*.

I. HE is so to the *human body*, seeing he destroys that excellent workmanship of God. Man, who is fearfully and wonderfully made, must see corruption. Neither *youth*, *sex*, or any other circumstance will avail to suspend his stroke. Did he only cut down the aged, to whom the grasshopper is a burden, whose desires fail, and on whom the days are come, in which they have no pleasure; we should view him, perhaps, with a "deliverer's hand." But so far from this, he often attacks the youth in all his bloom and beauty. His strokes are indiscriminate; like fire, which consumes without distinction, the superb building, with the humble cottage. And once he strikes the fatal blow, all the beauties of the human body disappear. The eyes, those sparkling orbs, lose all their lustre, and sink deep into their sockets.—The crimson which adorned the
cheek,

cheek, is exchanged for a mortal paleness—The lips are closed in a long, and awful silence—The right hand forgets its cunning, and the tongue cleaveth to the roof of the mouth; and all the just, the well-proportioned limbs are stiffened in death!

SHOULD we make a visit to the tomb, we shall be taught still more emphatically, that death is an enemy to the human body. Having entered those dreary mansions, we perceive them crowded with the spoils of the last enemy, from the *sucking infant*, to the man of *eighty*. In one place we are astonished to behold a corpse, not long interred, black as an *Ethiopian*: In another, a naked skull grins full in our faces! Amazed at the sight, we start back, and in haste retire from the place of skulls; and learn from thence to lessen our estimation of the most finished piece of animated clay; since death, our common enemy, will shortly rob it of all its beauties!

2. DEATH is an enemy to *temporal happiness* in general; but especially to the happiness of *wicked men*.

LET

LET the wicked, who have no expectation of a better state of being than the present, consider, That when a few years are come, they must go the way whence they shall not return. This prospect, though remote, at times destroys their present happiness; by introducing such thoughts as these—Death is ever on his way ;—I am hourly exposed to his envenomed arrows : Whenever he arrives, he will despoil me of my wealth, my honors, and my friends—yea, commit an universal depredation, and open to me a scene on which I fear to enter. He will rob me of a certainty, and transmit my soul, that conscious, thinking principle, to the world of spirits ; and to the bar of that God, in whose hand my breath is, but whom I have not glorified ; and who is angry with the wicked every day. Unhappy men ! They have nought to comfort them in the view of death, and the awful prospects of a future world.—

NOR is death an enemy to such only, for he destroys the temporal happiness of *good men*, by dissolving the most intimate, and pleasing connections. God made man

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for

for society ; if not, why induce him with social tempers ? Tempers, which forbid him to dwell alone : Influenced by which, he seeks for temporal happiness in *friendship*, which is the most refined and rational that men can enjoy on earth. But such is our condition in the present state, that the most exquisite pleasures, expose us to the most exquisite pains. The more happy we are in the enjoyment of any object, the more miserable we shall be, when that object is removed.

THE happy pair, who have enjoyed each other in perfect harmony, till old age has overtaken them ; and whose kindred minds are knit together by the strongest ties of mutual love, tell us, They would gladly finish life together ; and hand in hand ascend to join the blessed society above, had heaven so determined. But if, as it in common happens, death should make a separation between the aged lovers, how grievous is the trial !—The survivor, with his snow white locks, oppressed with infirmities and age, wanders from place to place as one forsaken, bewailing the cruelty of the *last enemy*.

WITH

WITH equal impartiality he acts towards a growing family, and the parents of a numerous off-spring; who have just reached life's meridian, and the summit of temporal felicity. Happy in their tempers, pleased with their domestic connections, and flushed with repeated successes, they began to think, that their mountain stood strong, and should never be moved. But death steps forth, and cuts off with one cruel blow, either the provident, and indulgent father; or the fond and tender mother, who had always looked well to the affairs of her house. Sad catastrophe! —What a family is there!—Reduced at once from the height of happiness, to the depth of wo! Their former animating prospects die, and the once chearful dwelling becomes a *Bochim*, a place of weeping. If, in obedience to the laws of religion and humanity, you go to the house of mourning, you at once perceive, that a solemn, expressive sadness sits on every face. That decent chearfulness, and engaging affability which heretofore prevailed, are swallowed up in over-much sorrow. One laments the loss of the partner of his joys and sorrows; the rest bewail the death

death of the best of parents ; and swell their grief to an enormous size, by a recollection of the happiness that is past ; and ten thousand fears of what is yet to come, in consequence of this bereavement.—Such distresses, my Brethren, heightened by the most delicate sensibility, will overwhelm the amiable and numerous family, of our deceased Friend and Brother, as soon as the awful tidings shall reach their ears.—May heaven administer divine support, lest they should faint in the day of their uncommon trial !—

SOMETIMES the last enemy passes by the *parents*, and violently assaults the *children*. And it is but just to say, that he frequently calls for ISAAC, if such there be.—Would to God that parents would be wise, and learn to guard against this too common fault ; the hurtful tendency of which we see in the case of *Joseph*, for whom the pious Patriarch indulged uncommon love. *Moses* informs us, That *Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren,*
they

they HATED him, and could not SPEAK PEACE-ABLY to him.—Nor is this the only evil that results from such impropriety of conduct; parents do themselves an injury; since, according to a preceding remark, The greater our degree of love is to any object, so much the heavier will the trial be, when that object is removed. And removed, we must expect it will be, from us, or we from it: For from death we are invariably to look for the treatment of an enemy. Hence we have seen

THE anxious couple, whose affections were reciprocally fixed, and on the eve of marriage, sorrowfully disappointed. Or they have been permitted to compleat their wishes, when death, as though envious at human happiness, hath suddenly dissolved the pleasing, new connection. These are facts, which are immediately calculated to teach us, That VANITY OF VANITIES, is a proper motto for all sublunary things.

3. I PASS to observe, that as an enemy, death comes to *lay waste, and to destroy.* *The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?* No; the grand
destroyer

destroyer hath long since fixed them in the
 land of darkness. The trophies of his vic-
 tory are erected in every country. Some-
 times he acts with a more sparing hand ;
 at other times he threatens totaliy to de-
 populate. In 1665, it was thought there
 died of the plague, in the city of *London*,
 sixty-eight thousand persons ; and in a
single week of that time, not less than seven
 thousand one hundred and sixty-five per-
 sons. And what havoc has he made a-
 mongst us !—Crowds on crowds unnum-
 bered, who once appeared in life to great
 advantage, after having served their gene-
 ration, have fallen asleep. Among the
 band of WORTHIES, whom death's rapa-
 cious hand hath snatched from the bosom
 of their friends and country, we place,
 with deepest sorrow, a WARREN, that
Proto-Martyr to the Liberties of *America*—
 a MONTGOMERY—a MACPHERSON—a
 CHEESMAN—a HENDRICKS ; — with all
 those worthy heroes, who have fought,
 and bled, and died in freedom's glorious
 cause.—To the venerable catalogue, with
 deep felt anguish, I am forced to place the
 honorable name of RANDOLPH, that dis-
 tinguished patriot, and friend to God and
 man.

man. For the loss of whom, we have scarce had time to dry our weeping eyes, before all the avenues of grief again are opened, by the present mournful providence, the untimely death of the no less honorable WARD; over whose remains, with undissembled sorrow, we now perform the solemn obsequies!—Thus death destroys,—or WARD had still lived to bless his family, to serve his country, and make the people happy.—But stop my soul!—It was heaven ordained the blow by which he finished life; and therefore it must be right!—

4. DEATH is *terrible in his approach.* Job rightly stiles him, *The king of terrors.* As men, and sometimes as christians, we shudder at the prospect of dissolution. To die—to be dissolved—to change worlds!—how solemn is the thought; how important are the consequences!—Yet some there are, who *have no bands in their death*; having hardened their consciences, either by a *course of sinning*, or by *false principles*. For both produce a like effect. Such instances, however, are few, compared with those who tremble in the view
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of death ; and infinitely more at the apprehension of appearing before an angry God ; on whose laws they have ever trampled, and who will not suffer them to pass with impunity. This event they can by no means shun, for death will never rest till

5. He hath *conquered*. We can neither escape the conflict, nor hope for victory till he himself is vanquished. He pays his court to none, but make as free with *kings* as *peasants*. He tears the crown from the monarch's head, forces him to lay his *regalia* aside, and consigns the royal body to the land of darkness. Even *Alexander*, who made the world to tremble, and wept because he had not other worlds to conquer, fell as easy a prey to this grim tyrant, as any other man. At this we cannot wonder, since

6. He has his variety of *engines*, and *weapons to destroy*. The conquest is *sure*, but the methods by which it is accomplished, are *various*. Sometimes he makes regular approaches, and by lingering sickness obtains the victory. At other times he attacks

tacks by storm, and forces the immortal mind from its slender fortrefs.—Wonder not that men die—rather wonder that so many live ; seeing the hidden death lurks in every enjoyment. The air in which we breathe, or the food we receive to nourish us, may convey the deadly poison, and hurry us to the grave :

7. WHERE the last enemy *confines the captives*. When he hath compleated his conquest, the lifeless body is conveyed to the house appointed for all living, there to remain in close imprisonment, till the morning of the resurrection ; when the *trump of GOD* shall sound a general alarm, and deliverance for the prisoners. It is apparent, that *St. Paul* had this circumstance particularly in view, when he assured us, that death shall be *destroyed*.

II. WE now pass to consider the second idea in the text,—Death is the *last* enemy.

I. THE *first* enemy was the *devil*, who being in honor, did not abide ; but left his first estate, hence was cast down to hell ; and who, envious at the happiness of man's

C

primæval

primæval state, contrived and effected his ruin, by the introduction of

2. SIN, an enemy the next in order : By which GOD's image on the mind is totally defaced ; the body exposed to death, and the soul to hell. Which was soon followed by

3. DISEASE : hence the human body became subject to numberless maladies, and was tortured with the most excruciating pains : Which in time introduced

4. DEATH, *the last enemy*. What is disease, but the harbinger of death ? Every pain we feel intimates his approach ; and that we must shortly go to that place, from whence we never shall return. Death then is the last in order, having entered last into the world ; and will retain his power, until CHRIST shall destroy him. Which naturally leads us to consider the third idea in the text,

III. DEATH shall be *destroyed*. He hath been a cruel and triumphant enemy, but
his

his destruction is inevitable : Nor will our salvation be compleat, till that event takes place. For this end it was, that CHRIST took flesh and blood, even *that he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil ; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.* From death none can be delivered ; but from the *fears* of death, our divine Redeemer hath saved his people,

1. *By removing his sting.* The *sting of death is sin*, says St. Paul. How proper, my Brethren, is this epithet, if we consider, that *death is the wages of sin*—that *conscious guilt* occasions unutterable anguish to the mind, and forces the sinner to cry out, *A wounded spirit who can bear ?* And that it will subject him, if unpardoned, to an eternal separation from God and glory. Sin thus viewed clothes death with all his terrors. But if sin be pardoned, we have nought to fear from the last enemy. And this is really the case with respect to all believers. JESUS CHRIST, their glorious Saviour, hath made
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an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness ; which is unto all, and upon all them who believe. *They are justified, sanctified, and washed, in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD.* In the belief of this truth, and others in connection with it, St. Paul triumphed over death ; and was led to place him in the inventory of a christian's treasures. *All things are yours—life and death : for ye are CHRIST's.* “ How
 “ thankful am I, said the devout HERVEY
 “ in his last sickness, for death, as it is the
 “ passage through which I pass to the
 “ LORD and Giver of eternal life ; and
 “ as it frees me from all this misery you
 “ now see me endure, and which I am
 “ willing to endure as long as God thinks
 “ fit ; for I know he will by and by, in
 “ his own good time, dismiss me from the
 “ body. These light afflictions are but
 “ for a moment, and then comes an eternal weight of glory. O ! welcome,
 “ welcome, death ;—thou mayst well be
 “ reckoned among the treasures of the
 “ christian. *To live is Christ, but to die is gain.*”—Such instances exemplify the
 truth

truth before us, that JESUS CHRIST hath conquered death, by affording to his people in the view thereof, strong consolation.

2. DEATH appears less terrible to the christian, when he considers also that he *will set him free, from all the evils of the present life*, whether natural or moral: From all pains of body—from all those complicated afflictions which he meets with from the world; and above all, from that body of sin and death which he carries about with him; and which causes him daily to groan, being burdened.

3. BUT his victory over death, as it respects the mind, is finished by the sure and certain hope, That *when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, he hath a building of GOD; an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*; where is fulness of joy, and pleasures forever.—There is no way to heaven, but through the valley of the shadow of death: Dark, but short the passage; and no sooner through, than the holy soul enters on the full fruition of eternal life. Then that
which

which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part, shall be done away.—O glorious hour! Let christians comfort themselves with the certain prospect of its arrival!—Thus the mind is comforted and secured.

4. NOR shall the *body* be left under the power of death: JESUS will compleat the conquest; for when the glorious resurrection shall be ushered in with a shout, the voice of the *Arch-angel*, and the trumpet of GOD; sleeping millions shall arise, and come forth: Death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them, and *then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* Well might our Apostle, and after him, all real believers thus exult, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*—*Thanks be to GOD who giveth us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.* Thus the resurrection of the body, is the final destruction of death.

PERMIT me now to subjoin a few reflections, on the preceding subject.

1. Is

1. Is death such an enemy to the human body, as hath been described? and will he certainly destroy its beauty, and consign it to the land of darkness, to turn to putrefaction?—What have we to be proud of? Dust is our original, and to dust we must return, according to the irrevocable decree of GOD. No man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to GOD a ransom for him. We say to *corruption, thou art my father: To the worm, thou art my mother, and my sister.* How humiliating is this consideration. Were we more frequently to consider what we *shall be*, we should not be so much delighted with what *we are*.

2. As death is so severe an enemy to our fond connections, it suggests a caution to us, to guard against placing our affections immoderately on them; which is not only injurious to ourselves, but offensive to the LORD, who will admit no competitor.

3. SEEING all men must die, all should be anxious to know how they may *die well.*

well. For all beyond the grave is vast, immutable eternity. In the *grave there is no work, wisdom or device.*—There is nothing that can call for our attention, of equal importance with this matter; because our condition in a future world will be fixed forever. A mistake, therefore, in this affair, will prove infinitely fatal. It becomes us to remember, That now is the accepted time, and the day of salvation. No man can have hope in his death, but he who has been renewed in the spirit of his mind. *Marvel not,* said CHRIST to *Nicodemus,* *that I said unto you, Ye must be born again.* Unless guilt is pardoned by CHRIST, and our souls conformed to GOD, through the influence of his ever blessed SPIRIT, we shall not be admitted to dwell with him in heaven. For nothing that defileth, worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of CHRIST, and of GOD.

4. Is it certain that the last enemy shall be finally destroyed by a glorious resurrection? Then *we sorrow not as those who have no hope : For if we believe that JESUS died,*

died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in JESUS will GOD bring with him.

IN fine. Is death regardless of distinctions?—most certainly. Of this we have an affecting instance now before us.—There lie the remains of our departed Friend and Brother, on whom heaven had been lavish of his favors; whose character needs not my feeble efforts to establish and adorn it.—Yet, that we may not be wanting in respect to the deceased, nor the living lose a bright example, have patience with me a few minutes.—But how shall I proceed! I know the difficulties that attend giving characters to the dead. It is hard to hit the happy medium: To say neither *too much*, nor yet *too little*. I will however, make truth my guide. And being sensible, that I am called on this occasion, to address the most AUGUST ASSEMBLY, ever convened in America; I will take encouragement from the consideration, That *great minds* are always *candid*.

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MR.

MR. WARD descended from one of the most antient, and honorable families of the Colony of *Rhode-Island*. From his youth up, such were his abilities and conduct, that he was esteemed by his countrymen, and loaded with public honors. He was often chose to serve as a representative in the House of Assembly—was also appointed to the office of Chief Judge of the Supreme Court: And as the highest honor that his country could confer on him, they elected him Governor of the Colony. In all which stations he conducted himself with reputation.—When the oppressive measures of the *British* ministry rendred a Continental Congress necessary, he was chosen one of the Delegates of that truly honorable Body. And I am authorized to say, That he stood high in their esteem; and was often appointed on Committees, to assist in transacting the most important business: To which he ever paid the closest attention, and was indefatigable.—No other circumstance need be mentioned, to show the esteem the colony had for him, than their choice of him as a Delegate, at a time
when

when every thing dear to *America* was at stake.—He was possessed of a fine mind, which had been improved by education—was a thorough patriot; a real, steady friend to the rights of mankind; he could neither be *awed*, nor *bribed* to sell his country, or sacrifice her freedom.

As a companion, he was sensible, pleasant, and improving; soft in his tempers, and easy in his manners.

As a christian, he was uniform and sincere; a hearty friend to divine revelation; a devout attendant at the Lord's-Table, and a worthy, useful member of the church to which he belonged.

In his family, he was the happy man. God had blessed him with a numerous off-spring, whom he taught by precept, and formed by his own example. They viewed him, not only as their father, but their best companion, and their friend. Their hearts were knit together by the strongest ties of mutual love. They imbibed his tempers, and copied him in life.

As

As a master, he was kind: Yet he was mortal. His assemblage of excellencies could not secure him from the iron hand of death.

IN his last illness he appeared composed, having placed his expectation of eternal life, on the merits of CHRIST JESUS; in whom, we trust, he now sweetly sleeps: And while we are paying the last kind office to his frail remains, his better, his immortal part hath joined the spirits of just men made perfect, who continually surround the throne of God, and of the LAMB.—His family, the colony to which he belonged; yea, all the Continent by his death have lost a friend indeed.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory and honor forever. Amen.

